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A PAPER PREPARED

BY

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S U B J E C T .

How shall we persuade the Siamese
people to accept the Gospel?



READ BEFORE

THE SIAM MISSION


AT ITS ANNUAL MEETING

SEPTEMBER 25th, 1903.

AND

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“HOW SHALL WE PERSUADE THE SIAMSE PEOPLE
TO ACCEPT THE GOSPEL?”

That word persuade is a fit word. It should be emphasized. In our contact with the people of Siam, trying to win them for the Master, an ounce of *persuasion* is worth more than a ton of compulsion, ridicule, or sarcasm. The Siamese people after all are not very unlike ourselves. You can persuade them a mile, but you cannot drive them an inch. Persuade may be defined: “to induce by argument or entreaty.” In making up the formula, I would say;—about one ounce of argument to every pint of entreaty, well flavored with love. Try it and you will find that the patient will “hanker” after the dose. It will not nauseate. To persuade is to induce, to lead into. Well; in order to lead we must first know the way and then walk in it, being careful not to deviate from the true path. In other words, if we would persuade this people to accept the Gospel we must live the Gospel. One of Siam’s most prominent princes said to the writer a few days ago;—“If all Christians would do as Jesus did, what great improvement it would make on this world.” The Apostle Paul said;—“Though I speak with the tongues of men”—ever so eloquently “and of angels,”—ever so sweetly and persuasively “and have not love I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.”

In laboring to lead this people how much we shall achieve, if we can truly say to them:—“Follow me as I follow Jesus.” Who wants to be an old brass gong going about twanging in the ears of this people? And yet Paul teaches that we shall be that and nothing more, if we try to persuade them to accept the Gospel without first living in the spirit of the Gospel. “He conquers who overcomes himself.” But with reference to my subject I should rather put it;—He conquers who is overcome by the Lord Jesus. If the love of Jesus constrains me, then the love of Jesus working through me, will constrain others. That’s a sure rule.

Let us, in this coming year of our work, test it and prove it. Probable that is enough exegesis, for only one word of my subject.

That good old word **PERSUADE!** The Apostle used this sense of it when he said, "We beseech you by the mercies of God." And, by the way, that is a very good way to persuade men to accept the Gospel. Beseech them by the mercies of God. I followed that rule with a man, on the island Samooie, about one week ago. For almost one hour I told him, with all my heart, of the mercies of God. His mercies in creation, in the sunshine, in the air we breathe, in the water that we drink, in our every day life; Our Father, caring for us with greater love and mercy than earthly parents; your Father; but above all His mercy; His loving kindness so manifest in Jesus. I dwelt on the latter. I love to do that. For I believe that one ounce of the mercies of God in the Lord Jesus, has, cheerfully given, more persuasive power than ten pounds of argument, no matter how logically given.

Well I told this man precious stories of the Mercies of God, and he was thus persuaded, that night, to accept the Gospel. Then let us persuade the Siamese people, by the Mercies of God, to accept the Gospel of our Lord. In studying this subject I found still another good rule for persuading this people to accept the Gospel. It is in the following;— "We pray you in Christs stead to be ye reconciled to God." Oh how much earnestness of soul the Apostle put into that expression;— "We pray you." Are we in the habit of trying so earnestly to persuade men that we pray them to accept the Gospel? But the main part of this rule, to which I beg your attention, is found in the three words;— "In Christs stead". With what compassion and earnestness Jesus moved among the people of His time. "He went about doing good."

And there was persuasion in every touch of His hand. As He went from village to village in the Holy Land.

(See Mathew 9th 35-39.) **COMPASSION!** let that blessed word have a large place in your heart. Then you will have

persuasive power with the people for whom you labor.

Jesus, in his blessed person, is not going about the villages of Siam, trying to persuade the people to accept His Gospel, but He does desire to go, through us, into the homes of this people. In other words He wants us to go to Siam's people in His stead.

Then let us keep this high ideal before us;—“In Christ's stead.” That means that we are to talk to them in the same spirit in which He talked. He made His work an organic part of Himself. It was his meat and drink. He was fonder of it than of His daily food. So must we love to tell men about Jesus far more than we love our meat and drink. No half-hearted entreaty will persuade men. We must be whole-hearted to be persuasive.

I have thought of a few individuals that Jesus tried to persuade. And, of His methods with them.

The mercenaries that we read about in the Gospel of John 6th Chapter:—“Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. How did Jesus treat them? Did He turn them down? No! He preached to them one of the grandest sermons of His life. He told them of the bread of God. He even extended to them the assurance that we so often love to utter. “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” It has been said, over and over, of the people at one of our stations:—“O these people are after the loaves and fishes, that is all they want” until I have often wondered whether this estimate of that people has not hindered us in our effort to persuade them to accept the Gospel. When Henry Martin found that the Hindoos only came for temporary relief and seemed to care nothing for his preaching he was on the point of giving up in despair. But this wonderful sermon of Jesus to bread seekers came to his mind and he said “If the Lord Jesus was not ashamed to preach to mere bread seekers who am I that I should give over in disgust.” Then if at times, in trying to persuade our fellow men to accept the Gospel we grow discouraged by their mercenary motives let us study

carefully this 6th Chapter of John—and see how Jesus with wonderful tact and earnestness, preached to such people.

The second individual that I thought of, was probably a timid one. He came to Jesus by night, and he seemed to have been a rationalist and materialist. We would think not a very promising case. Now did Jesus think that to teach him would be a waste of time? Did he say it is late at night. The Mosquitoes are very bad. I bid you good-night. No! you have read the third Chapter of John—and you know what a wonderful sermon, on the new birth and the love of God our Lord preached to that materialistic nobleman. Did this method prove successful? Yes. For it persuaded Nicodemus to accept the Gospel.

Now permit me to say to you that if a rationalistic, materialistic Siamese nobleman should seek you late at night the best way for you to try to persuade him to accept the Gospel, is to rub the sleep out of your eyes, take your mind away from that comfortable bed of yours, Let the mosquitoes take all the blood they want—may be they will relieve you of some of your bad blood—then treat the nobleman just like Jesus treated Nicodemus. Explain to him, with the earnestness of your soul that wonderful third chapter of John—and your faithful service will not be in vain. “Accordling to your faith be it unto you.”

Then there was the moralist, just such an one as we often meet in Siam, one who was sanguine that he could make heaven by his own efforts, and that eternal life was due him because of his good works. In fact he talked to Jesus, very much as some of our Siamese friends talk to us. He told how he had kept the commandments from his youth up. Now how did Jesus deal with this Moralist? “Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him.” What is our attitude toward those who come to us telling of their merit? Do we love them? Alas! I fear that we pour out more sarcasm and are more impatient with them than with any other class. They are often just as faithful in keeping the commands as was this young man whom Jesus loved—and tried with his heart of love, to persuade to a life of self denial. It will

always pay to tell such of the powerful merits of Jesus.

The fourth individual, that I found was a mother, she was not only mercenary but very ambitious. Still she brought her two sons and all worshipped Jesus. Now Jesus and the ten Disciples knew just how ambitious, mercenary and selfish these three were. The Disciples had no tact, no patience in dealing with them. "They were moved with indignation against the two brethren." They had no heart to try to persuade them to a better life. They put their magnifying glass on the fault and therefore had no power of persuasion. And if we do thus we shall make the same mistake every time. We will lose heart and with it lose persuasive power. But thank God, such was not the spirit of Jesus. "But Jesus called them unto him, and said, ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; Even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Permit me to introduce the fifth person. She was not a rationalist neither a moralist nor an ambitious one, but only a poor sinful woman. I think she was a very bad woman. Probably our estimate would be expressed in an old hopeless phrase. "She was past saving." Now when this woman came to Jesus the Master was weary, hungry and thirsty. Was he governed by these feelings, so that he lost the opportunity to persuade this sinful one to accept the Gospel? No! For with the love, wisdom, power and patience of his great soul, forgetting his weariness and hunger he told that poor sinful woman of the water of life.

This one of the grandest sermons of his life, he preached to a lone sinful woman. Was the effort wasted? "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified;— "He told me all that ever I did."

So we should not turn away from the most sinful. We may

be weary—but we should love such souls more than we love ease in our long veranda chairs. We may be hungry but if we would persuade poor sinful ones to accept the Gospel we must love them more than we love our good food and luscious mangoes. If you would persuade the Siamese people, especially the very sinful ones—then follow our Saviour's rule as recorded in John 4th Chapter.

I think that we have learned from these several cases of Our Master dealing with the individual that tact is absolutely essential in persuading men to accept the Gospel. No matter how perfectly you may have learned the language if you lack tact then your efforts may drive the Siamese people away from the Gospel. And necessary to tact is a close sympathetic contact with the people. Therefore I say, study the people just as closely and with as much interest, as you study the language. The failures of missionaries, are not so much due to lack in the language, as to failure in understanding the people. Don't be like the missionary who wrote home:- "I am deeply interested in the study of the language—I am charmed with the scenery of the country. I greatly enjoy the luscious fruits. In fact I like everything but the people." I venture to say that the missionary who has gained perfection in the language, but has failed to learn the people, will have far less influence in persuading them to accept the Gospel than the missionary who has come to understand the people and sympathize with them though he is only medium in command of the language. In this I hope I shall not be understood as discounting a hard study of the language.

Now what do we mean by this tact which we hold as so essential in persuading men to accept the Gospel?

Tact, has been defined as nice perception or skill. That is a very good definition—but as bearing on the subject in hand, the following one is better:- "Tact is wise and loving thoughtfulness."

The true place to learn how to exercise that kind of

tact, in trying to persuade men to accept the Gospel, is to be found in the life of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel. I have found this summed up as follows :

- (1) We there find that Jesus was never rude. Rudeness will never persuade. The Siamese people are afraid of rudeness.
- (2) Jesus in his labors never, needlessly, spoke a harsh word.
- (3) Jesus never gave needless pain to a sensitive heart.
- (4) He was most considerate of human weakness.
- (5) Jesus was most gentle toward all human sorrow.
- (6) He never suppressed the truth. But He uttered it in love.
- (7) His whole life tells of most considerate thoughtfulness for others.

So, I believe, that if we would persuade this people to accept the Gospel we should try to change our bluntness and rudeness into true gentleness. This is true tact and it will seldom fail to win. Bishop Thoborn, the leader of Methodist missionaries in India, in expressing his views on this subject, once said; "Don't argue, don't ridicule. If I could recall some of the sermons I first preached I would be glad to. I used to be proud of the fact that I could debate for two hours at a time with learned Mohamadans. But now I am sorry I ever did it. If I went around asserting, boastfully, that Jesus Christ is the eternal son of God, a dozen Mohamadans would be after me at once. But now I strive to tell of the love of Christ. His power to save. Where He will take us when life's journey is over. And again and again have I said this is truth as I see it. And while I have been speaking to you God has been working in your hearts. And if I am wrong I will have you tell me so. Correct doctrine is of comparatively little account unless the missionary could carry a message of love."

Prince Damrong, The Minister of the Interior. Once said to the writer. "Missionary, as you go over Siam publishing

Christianity I hope you don't abuse our people because of their religion, or ridicule them because of their superstitions. No Missionary don't do that. But tell them about the love of Jesus that will make better men and women of them."

The late Dr. McFarland, that Prince among missionaries in correct use of the Siamese language, and untiring in work for this people once told me "that at one time he was proud of the amount of sarcasm and ridicule that he could pile on to the Buddhists." Then he added, "but that was the greatest mistake of my life as a missionary." And why was it so?

Because there was no tact, or wise loving thoughtfulness, in it. I have heard of a missionary in India, who boasted of his ability to heap ridicule on the Hindoo Gods and was one day doing so to the best of his ability. After the service an educated Hindoo begged to speak and during the course of his remarks addressing the missionary respectfully, he said;—"Sir you have shown great ability in ridiculing our Gods and showing their defects. We know all that. Sir, would it not be better for you to tell us something about Jesus?"

I remember hearing a missionary when preaching hard against Buddhism use this expression;—"le Buddachow, mun penari, mun mi roo chak quam ching." That missionary never knew the result: but I well remember that just as he had finished the abusive expression a rather fine looking Siamese officer arose and said;—"le maw nan tate yang nan ka mi yahm fang." Now let us put these expressions into English and see how they sound. "That vagabond Buddha: what does he know. He dont know the truth." And the Siamese officer replied "That vagabond missionary, if it preaches like that, I will not listen." And he left the chapel in anger, never to return again. Imagine, if you please, a Buddhist priest addressing a christian audience in America, and using such abusive language about Jesus. What do you think would be the result? So let us, in trying to persuade the Siamese people to accept the Gospel, follow the golden rule. I rejoice to say that the above mentioned missionary is

trying to do that by telling the people about the love of Jesus and His power to save. The following words of another bears strongly on this subject in presenting Christianity to the people of the East.

There has been in the past a too prevalent feeling that our Western ideas were so superior that it was not only a privilege but a duty to override, and trample down all prejudices of the heathen mind. For instance in pictures of idols and heathen acts of worship it has not been uncommon to make use of an element of sarcasm, as well as exaggeration, in utter forgetfulness of the fact that the heathen mind does not at first view things from our standpoint. A great point is gained when an attitude of fairness, candor, appreciation and Christian courtesy is taken. Our work among these people is not a work of iconoclasm except incidentally. What is needed, in persuading these people to accept Christianity is to present the Gospel to them in a true Christian spirit: a courteous presentation of the more excellent way.

It is a repetition of the old fable of the storm and the sunshine in their rival attempts to deprive a traveller of his wraps.

I have thought of many other answers to this all important question;- "How to persuade these people, whom we love, to accept the Gospel." But I can only mention them with the hope that others may take them up. Present the Gospel with all the enthusiasm of your soul. In dealing with needy sinful men never lose grip on your enthusiasm. Think of Judson in the foul prison of Burma, with thirty two pounds of chains on his ankles and his feet bound up to a bamboo pole, when taunted by a fellow prisoner saying;- "Dr. Judson what about the prospect of the conversion of the heathen"— answering with unwavering enthusiasm — "The prospects are just as bright as the promises of God." Or of Jewett, when the American Baptist Missionary Union had lost heart and was thinking of abandoning the work among the Telegus, enthusiastically pleading for those people, saying;- Don't abandon them. God has a people among them. If you abandon them I shall go back to the Telegus alone, unaided save by

the spirit of God. Was such enthusiasm fruitless? Witness the five hundred christian churches of Burma and the many thousand happy christians among the Telegus!

Present the Gospel with deep convictions of its Divine source, and its wonderful adaptation to the needs of the people to whom you give it

Labor for the individual, never give up a man whose friendship you have gained and who manifests the least interest in the Gospel. Mackay, so successful in Formosa, attached great importance to this. He held fast all he got.

A desperate dacoit who had murdered a number of people, and was the terror of many districts of Burma, once wandered into a chapel and listened with closest attention to the preaching. The missionary noticed him and asked him to come again; Held on to him and invited him to repeated talks in his home. The dacoit was converted, accepted the Gospel and became an ardent preacher of the truth. The multitudes heard him gladly. Thousands were persuaded to accept the Gospel through his ministry. Thus the converted dacoit "Kothabu" became the Apostle to the Karens. Dr. Nevius discounted Bazar preaching and magnified personal contact with the individual.

I would not discount the former but I would say seek out the individual and keep track of him.

Finally, and above all the essential thing in persuading men to accept the Gospel is love. This was preeminent in our Masters work for sinful men. It led him to lay down his life for them. Without it, we will be mere brass gongs or tinkling cymbals. I shall never forget this beautiful picture of christian love in action for a poor abandoned sinful man. A cripple, who was told by a disciple of Jesus to call for the medical missionary and replied, "O he will not take any notice of a poor loathsome creature like me." But the disciple answered "yes he will, just try him." The writer went to that little bamboo hut with the medical missionary, and it was so filthy that it took great effort to enter it. The poor man was covered with foul ulcers. The

medical missionary, moved by the spirit of him whose hand touched the leper, with warm water cleansed those ulcers and I read to the cripple the wonderful stories of Jesus' love and healing power. The tears ran down the old man's face and he exclaimed, "O missionary I have never seen love like this." O the love of Jesus! It broke and won his heart. He became a happy christian and was baptized in the little hut. We carried the elements of Jesus broken body and shed blood into that little hut. And there the three of us commemorated His dying love. His love passeth all understanding! One eminent in winning souls, has emphasized this thought in the following words:- "All the self denial, patience, tenderness and delicacy of love are needed as the Lord knew well in dealing with men who are naturally uninteresting or perhaps repulsive; and hence our Lord saw the necessity that there should be love. "But how could there be love for them?" I answer only by love to Jesus. Love him truly then your heart will take in the whole World. It is not science nor intellect nor eloquence that wins souls but love to Christ pouring over in love to men. Love will give you a delicacy of perception, and ingenuity of persuasiveness which no heart shall be able to resist. Love will reconcile the profound scholar to a life among savages and it will carry us through the jungles of Siam to the regions beyond. It will carry the refined and cultured woman with the precious tidings into the most unattractive homes. Love will bear all, believe all, hope all, endure all, if only it may win men for Christ. The true secret of endurance is love. May the love of Christ constrain us. May we be rooted and grounded in it, so that we shall be well prepared to persuade the Siamese people to accept the Gospel.

A quaint old Divine once said. "In order to preach, one ought to take three looks before every sermon. One at the depth of thy wretchedness. Another at the depth of human wretchedness all around thee. And a third at the love of God in Jesus. So that empty of self and full of compassion toward thy fellow men thou mayest be able to minister God's comfort to souls."



DATE DUE

MAR 6 '69			
Mar 7, 69			
GAYLORD			PRINTED IN U.S.A.



